

Appln. No.: 10/612,283
Amendment Dated: Nov. 14, 2008
Reply to Office Action dated August 14, 2008

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Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the Application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for automatically selecting and packaging items for mailing, comprising the steps of:

storing item characteristics for a plurality of items, the item characteristics including at least one of a weight and a thickness of each of the plurality of items;

~~storing postal costs for packages based on package characteristics;~~

~~receiving an customer order specifying a plurality of items for a shipment, the shipment comprising at least one package;~~

storing a list comprising identifiers corresponding to the plurality of items specified in~~by~~ the customer order;

automatically determining, based on the identifiers and the stored item characteristics corresponding to the identifiers, at least one of a total weight and total thickness for the plurality of items specified in the order;

comparing the at least one of the total weight and total thickness to at least one of a maximum weight and maximum thickness allowable for a postal class that will be used for mailing the shipment;

determining a number of packages required for comprising the shipment and determining which items of the customer order will be contained in each package such that the at least one of the total weight and total thickness of each package will be less

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than the at least one of the maximum weight and maximum thickness allowable for the postal class that will be used for mailing the shipment; and

the determining step carried out based on the identifiers, the stored item characteristics corresponding to the identifiers and the postal costs for packages

assembling the determined number of packages.

2. (Currently Amended) A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein, the customer order is received by mail on a pre-printed form.

3. (Canceled)

4. (Currently Amended) A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein assembling the determined number of packages further comprises including steps of:

printing respective mailers, each mailer corresponding to a package for the shipment, each mailer defining the customer selected items to that will be contained in comprise the corresponding package;

placing each mailer on an assembly line; and

placing each customer selected item that will be contained in comprising each package on the corresponding mailer as the mailer traverses the assembly line.

5. (Currently Amended) A method in accordance with claim 4 wherein:

each mailer comprises a printed paper mailer;

each paper mailer includes, on a first side, a bar code indicative of the items that will be contained to be packaged with the mailer in the corresponding package and on a second side a customer delivery address for the corresponding package.

6. (Currently Amended) A method in accordance with claim 5, wherein assembling the determined number of packages further the assembly line comprises:

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scanning a scanner for reading the bar code on each mailer to determine the items of the order that will be contained in the package corresponding to the mailer; and

a plurality of hoppers, each hopper containing a plurality of like items; and

a mechanism responsive to computer control for moving the items an item from a hopper onto the a mailer to assemble the package corresponding to the mailer.

7. (Currently Amended) A method in accordance with claim 6, further comprising:

printing and further including a customer message on the front of a mailer readable by a customer and indicating that a customer an order has been fulfilled in multiple packages.

8. (Currently Amended) A method in accordance with claim 7, further comprising:

a step of shrink-wrapping each of the packages in a plastic wrap so that the customer delivery address and customer message are readable through the plastic wrap.

9. (Currently Amended) A method in accordance with claim 4 wherein the step of receiving a customer order is received performed at a location geographically remote from the step of placing each mailer on an assembly line.

10. (Currently Amended) A system for selecting and packaging items for mailing, comprising:

a processor;

a memory connected to the processor, the memory storing data and instructions for controlling the operation of the processor; the processor operative to perform the steps of:

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storing item characteristics for a plurality of items, the item characteristics including at least one of the weight and the thickness of each of the plurality of items;

~~storing postal costs for packages based on package characteristics;~~

receiving ~~a customer~~ an order specifying a plurality of items for a shipment;

storing a list comprising identifiers corresponding to the plurality of items specified in the order to comprise the shipment;

~~automatically determining, based on the identifiers and the stored item characteristics corresponding to the identifiers, at least one of a total weight and total thickness for the plurality of items specified in the order;~~

comparing the at least one of the total weight and total thickness to at least one of a maximum weight and maximum thickness allowable for a postal class that will be used for mailing the shipment; and

determining a number of packages required for comprising the shipment and determining which items of the customer order will be contained in each package such that the at least one of the total weight and total thickness of each package will be less than the at least one of the maximum weight and maximum thickness allowable for the postal class that will be used for mailing the shipment;

~~the determining step carried out based on the identifiers and the postal costs for packages.~~

11. (Currently Amended) A system in accordance with claim 10 wherein the customer order is received by mail on a pre-printed form.

12. (Canceled)

13. (Currently Amended) A system in accordance with claim 10, further comprising:

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an assembly line for assembling each of the packages; and further including the step of printing a mailer for each package in the shipment, the printed mailer for each package being placed on the assembly line;

placing each mailer on the assembly line; and

placing wherein each item in each package is placed on the associated mailer as the mailer traverses the assembly line.

14. (Currently Amended) A system in accordance with claim 13 wherein:

each mailer comprises a printed paper mailer;

each paper mailer includes, on a first side, a bar code indicative of the items that will be contained to be packaged with the mailer in the corresponding package and on a second side a delivery customer address for the corresponding package.

15. (Currently Amended) A system in accordance with claim 14 wherein the assembly line further comprises:

a scanner for reading the bar code on each mailer;

a plurality of hoppers, each hopper containing a plurality of like items; and

a mechanism responsive to computer control for moving an item from a hopper onto a mailer.

16. (Currently Amended) A system in accordance with claim 15, wherein at least one mailer and further including a customer includes a message on the front of a mailer readable by a customer and indicating that a customer an order has been fulfilled in multiple packages.

17. (Currently Amended) A system in accordance with claim 156 wherein the assembly line further comprises:

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~~a wrapping station to wrap step of packaging each of the sub-orders includes shrink Wrapping each of the packagessub-orders in a plastic wrap so that the customer address and customer message are readable through the plastic wrap.~~

18. (Currently Amended) A system in accordance with claim 130 wherein the ~~processor~~~~step of receiving a customer order is performed at a location geographically remote from the assembly line~~~~step of packaging each of the sub-orders.~~

19-22. (Canceled)